



CONNECTICUT  
LEGAL  
RIGHTS  
PROJECT, INC.

WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN PUBLIC HEARING 2/16/16

In support of Raised S. B. 75,

AN ACT CONCERNING DETAINED YOUTH

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children:

My name is Kathy Flaherty, and I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project, which represents low-income adults with psychiatric disabilities, including young adults 18 and over, who reside in hospitals or the community, on matters related to their treatment, recovery, and civil rights.

CLRP joins those who support Raised Senate Bill 75, An Act Concerning Detained Youth.

The young people who are detained in Connecticut's juvenile justice system should not be subjected to further trauma caused by the use of restraint and seclusion. My experience as a member of the State of Connecticut Restraint and Seclusion Prevention Initiative Partnership, representing individuals with lived experience of seclusion and restraint, has demonstrated to me the importance of preventing the use of restraint and seclusion in service environments across the life span. Particularly for children and young adults served by a system whose stated purpose is rehabilitation, not punishment, the continued use of seclusion and restraint can result in additional harm. The use of restraint and seclusion can be physically injurious and psychologically traumatic for the children and young adults being restrained and secluded, as well as for the staff members involved in the process.

It is necessary to have a consistent definition, across agencies, of what comprises seclusion and restraint. In addition, we must have accurate data about the use of restraints. We must provide the staff who work with Connecticut's children and young adults the access to the tools and supports they need to do their jobs. We must provide proper training and supervision; facilities must maintain adequate staffing. Connecticut needs a leadership commitment to foster a positive and supportive service environment and to prevent the use of restraint and seclusion. This bill represents a comprehensive approach that will benefit young adults in state custody.